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## ABSTRACT

In 1983, Charles County Community College (CCCC) initiated a project to infuse academic information from the sciences, humanities, and social sciences into developmental courses. The reorganization assignments related to 27 topics that promoted academic examination and cultural literacy while at the same time drawing from students' own experiences. The goals of the writing assignments were to validate students' own experiences and opinions and instill confidence that their thoughts were worth recording; to move students from spoken to written language gradually; to encourage collaborative learning; to make students more aware of and comfortable with the shared values of the college community; and to introduce concepts one at a time, producing cumulative and recursive results. After describing CCCC's approach to developmental writing, this paper provides the following nine sample writing assignments: (1) Subject-Verb Agreement; (2) Proofreading; (3) Writing About a Hero; (4) Gathering Information About Heroes, a research assignment in which students interview 20 people; (5) Researching Heroes, a more traditional research assignment involving the use of reference books; (6) Audience Analysis, in which students examine advertisements and reviews of a movie to determine the characteristics of the intended audience; (7) Writing Good Topic Sentences; (8) Paragraph Patterns, in which students determine the organizational pattern of a given paragraph and then produce a related paragraph; and (9) Rhetorical Modes: Cause and Effect, in which students interview war veterans and write about the physical and/or emotional effects of war on the veterans. For each assignment, instructions for the instructor and examples of students' completed work are provided. (PAA)

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Integrating Academic Information  
into Developmental Writing Courses

Presentation at National Association  
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Don't developmental writing teachers already have enough to do without trying to teach geography, history, science, and psychology? Are we crazy to try to give students information about the arts and sciences at the same time we teach them to spell, read, write, and think? These questions occurred to us when the Committee on the Future of Maryland Community Colleges mandated that "community colleges integrate the arts and sciences with the developmental program." When our college asked us to redesign the developmental writing program to respond to this mandate, we had to face these questions head on. At first, we had doubts about whether this redesign was feasible. However, as we considered the problem and investigated various approaches, the advantages of using arts and sciences information as the basis of the developmental writing course became more apparent. In today's presentation, we will share the history and assumptions underlying our approach to integrating content into the developmental writing class and will present some examples of assignments and practical strategies that you might try.

In 1983, when we first designed the developmental writing program at Charles County Community College, we made certain assumptions about the students and the course that proved to be wrong. First of all, we assumed that students would be essentially like our freshman composition students except that they would be less

developed in their writing ability. We expected to give them some writing practice, teach some rules of grammar and mechanics and make them proficient writers in one semester. However, it was soon clear that developmental students differed from their freshman composition counterparts more dramatically than we had anticipated. Our students lacked more than writing skills; they lacked study skills, reading skills, and critical thinking skills. Added to this were the students' personal and educational problems. Many students were dealing with difficult situations at home and on the job. They often worked full time while going to school; many had children and had difficulty with child care; our rural setting meant that students often had transportation problems. Many were facing the emotional strains of having families who did not support their academic efforts. We also found a significant number of students who were learning disabled or had other neurological or physical impairments. Contrary to our assumption, developmental students are quite different from traditional, freshman composition students.

Our second false assumption was that the fundamental purpose of the developmental English courses is to provide students with the writing skills necessary for success in freshman composition courses. We thought that if we taught students to compose well organized, mechanically correct paragraphs and essays, they would be

able to successfully perform the writing tasks required in their other college courses. We discovered, however, this assumption was as incorrect as our first one.

Students who were successful writers in our developmental classes were not necessarily successful in their other classes. A student who could write an organized, specific, mechanically correct description of his rebuilt '57 Chevy for his developmental English teacher could not write a competent description of his dissected frog for his biology instructor. A developmental student who could draw on her own experience as a young mother to write a powerful essay persuading teenagers not to have babies could not write a convincing essay persuading her history professor that the New Deal damaged the integrity of the family. We realized that teaching the forms, structures, rules, and methods of writing was not enough to turn a developmental writer into a college writer.

Students in our developmental classes could learn to write well enough about personal topics, but because they did not seem to share the general knowledge and culture which predominated in academic circles, they could not adequately evaluate their audience, understand their purpose, define appropriate topics, or choose adequate evidence when asked to do so in the context of an academic course. Once students were asked to write about something outside their own worlds and to write in

something other than their "own voices," they were lost.

We, along with many of our colleagues in the field of composition, have speculated at length about the nature and source of this gap between students' worlds and the academic world. Mike Rose, in Lives on the Boundary considers the problem at length, highlighting the socio-economic origins of the gap. In the November 1989 edition of College English, Edward Lotto's article "Utterance and Text in Freshman English" explains why students, who live primarily in a speaking/listening culture, have trouble reading and responding to academic texts. Hirsch, of course, believes that the gap can be explained by "cultural illiteracy." The state of Maryland, by mandating the integration of arts and sciences content into our developmental courses, seemed to agree with Hirsch. Though we do not believe that teaching developmental students to be "culturally literate" is the total answer to their educational problems, we decided that creative use of arts and sciences information would facilitate students' transition into the academic community. Our goal, then, became the restructuring of the developmental English courses in order to merge content with skill so that we could improve students' general knowledge and familiarize them with the habits of academic thought while providing instruction in the necessary college writing and thinking skills. To do so, we had to find a way to efficiently

incorporate information that college students might be expected to know in the areas of history, geography, science, literature, social sciences, and the arts.

Choosing academic material that would fit into the developmental writing curriculum presented two major problems: first of all, the material could not take up too much class time, (since we already had enough to do) and, secondly, the material would have to be at an appropriate level. We considered various options including having students subscribe to Time or Newsweek, or using an "Across the Curriculum" reader. We rejected these options because we believed that using these texts would take too much class time away from writing instruction and practice. Moreover, these materials seemed to be so alien to our students' experience that we feared that students might feel as lost in these texts as they often do in their sociology and chemistry classes. We wanted to use material that would help students see and develop connections between their worlds and the academic world. It occurred to us that the best way to help students overcome their lack of academic information and critical thinking skills was first to engage students in the world around them, the world they know best. Then we could forge links between their world and the academic world they are entering as college students.

Once we decided not to incorporate other texts, we were back to square one. It was all very well to talk

about building bridges between worlds, but how would we do it in the classroom? How could we encourage students to engage in their world and lead them to feel comfortable in the academic world in the same short time we were expected to teach them grammar, spelling, and topic sentences?

The first part of our solution was to organize the course around broad topics from the sciences, humanities, and social sciences. The topics we selected would lend themselves to "academic" examination, but would also intersect with the students' own experiences. The twenty-seven topics included the following: architecture, heroes, explorers, literature, music, film and television, folktales and myths, painting and photography, crafts, marriage, advertising, sports and games, ethnic groups in America, family structures, gender differences, working life, wars and revolutions, education, cars, weather, computers, illness and disease, inventions and discoveries, physical geography, drugs and medicines, intelligence and the brain, and health and nutrition.

In thinking about, talking about, and writing about these topics, students would be exposed to new information and attitudes while still being able to draw on the knowledge and experiences they already have. For example, in the unit on Family Structures, students not only learn to express clearly in writing their concerns

about their own families, but they also learn that their family concerns can be examined in a slightly different--more "academic"--way. In the unit on Cars, they learn that the methods for gathering information about buying a car (talking to people, reading and investigating for themselves) are the same methods they will use to gather information for their sociology and biology classes. As you can see, the list is idiosyncratic and arbitrary.

The underlying assumption behind organizing the course around these topics is that students must think clearly to write clearly; and since it is easiest to think clearly about what one knows, students should start thinking and writing about the familiar--although not necessarily or exclusively the personal. This engagement with their own culture will help lead to their acquisition of critical thinking and writing skills which they can then apply to topics further removed from their everyday concerns. As students gain power over their own culture, they will be empowered to gain control over a less familiar culture--the discourse community of the academic classroom. By choosing topics that were both accessible to students and appropriate for academic discussion, we felt we had established a good foundation for our new arts and sciences based developmental course. but we now needed to design topic-related exercises and writing assignments which would give students the writing practice and language skills they needed. Our questions

became, "How do we teach students about misplaced modifiers or thesis statements while exposing them to information about wars and revolutions"? "How do we help students see weather as more than a topic for small talk"?

When designing assignments, we kept in mind the following goals:

1. The assignments should validate students' own experiences and opinions, giving them confidence that what they think is worth recording and can be translated into "academic" forms that will be acceptable to their professors.
2. Students should gradually move from spoken to written language, first expressing their ideas in familiar, informal forms of communication such as conversation and letters and gradually learning to use more unfamiliar, academic forms such as essays and reports.
3. The assignments should encourage collaborative learning so that students will develop a better sense of their identity as writers and readers in an academic community.
4. The assignments should make students more aware of and comfortable with the values and attitudes shared by members of the college community. For example, students need to learn

that in college classes they must provide evidence to support their opinions (something they may not need to do in their dinner-table conversations).

5. The assignments should be cumulative and recursive, introducing concepts of composition and mechanics one at a time and then asking students to repeatedly practice these concepts throughout the course.

Using these goals as a guide, we developed a variety of assignments around the arts and sciences topics we had chosen.

The first five exercises, all on the topic of heroes, show the diversity of the assignments that can evolve from any one topic. The first exercise is a routine grammatical exercise on subject-verb agreement. Before asking students to fill in the blanks, we ask them to identify the two heroes named in the exercise--Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi. Although the exercise presents basic factual information about Gandhi and King, it also, in the last three sentences, leads students to higher level thinking, by comparing the two men and examining what made them heroic. Incidentally, if you decide to try this approach, you'll be pleased to discover how much quicker and easier it is to write ten sentences on one topic than one sentence on each of ten topics.

#### Exercise 1

##### Subject-verb agreement

Underline the subject of these sentences. Then fill in the correct present-tense form of the verb in parentheses.

1. Many people today (believe) \_\_\_\_\_ modern heroes are hard to find.
2. However, I (think) \_\_\_\_\_ the last half-century has produced some interesting heroes.
3. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi both frequently (appear) on people's lists of heroes.
4. We (know) \_\_\_\_\_ Martin Luther King, Jr. best for leading the Civil Rights Movement in the United States.
5. The Civil Rights Movement changed many laws that discriminated against Blacks and other minorities. The

- movement (continue) \_\_\_\_\_ today in many forms, even though Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated.
6. Gandhi's fame (come) \_\_\_\_\_ from his role in leading India's independence movement.
7. Through protests and demonstrations, he united the Indian people and forced the British government to grant India independence. India still (struggle) \_\_\_\_\_ to keep its people unified.
8. Millions of people (remember) \_\_\_\_\_ these men because they accomplished major changes in their countries without using violent methods.
9. It (seem) \_\_\_\_\_ to me that these men are heroes, not because they changed their worlds, but because they changed them nonviolently.
10. Violent change often (happen) \_\_\_\_\_ under the leadership of lesser men and women, but it (take) \_\_\_\_\_ a hero's bravery and intelligence to bring about change nonviolently.

c Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1990

The second exercise provides proofreading practice. We frequently ask students to proofread material--including, of course, their own writing--because many of our students are unaccustomed to examining text closely. Once they develop some proofreading ability, they are able to locate and correct many basic errors in their writing. In this exercise, which is in the early part of the course, students are asked to identify subjects

and verbs and to find and correct errors in verb forms. The exercise attempts to intersect with students' lives and to lead students to think about their own experiences and about who they consider heroic and why. Students tend to approach the overall topic of heroes as if there were an immutable list in the Bureau of Standards, and so some of the concepts in this exercise are new to them--e.g., that age, gender, race, religion, social background affect the choice of a hero, that the same person can be considered a hero by one group and a traitor by another, and that our choice of heroes reflects our beliefs and values. This exercise usually provides a springboard for a brief discussion of students' choices of a hero and the reasons for their choices. The exercise also validates their experiences--i.e., they begin to realize that their choice of a hero is as valid as the choices made by others. Enormous gains can be made if students realize early in the semester that, by thinking about the information they have and about their experiences, they can produce ideas that are both original and acceptable in the college classroom.

## Exercise 2

### Proofreading Exercise

In each sentence underline the subject once and the verb twice. Circle each incorrect verb form and write the correct form in the space above the error.

#### People's Choices of Heroes

- (1) Everybody have different ideas about who is a hero.
- (2) People's opinions changes depending on their age, gender,

race, country, education, religion, and social background.

(3) In the 1930s many Germans believe that Hitler was a hero.

(4) Today, very few people thought that he is. (5) Sometimes the same person is consider a hero by one group and a traitor by another. (6) For example, when Cesar Chavez organize the migrant farm workers, he become a hero to them, but he was not a hero to the farm owners. (7) Some people is heroes in one country but not in another country. (8) For example, the Ayatollah Khomeini be a hero to the Iranian people but not to most Americans.

(9) People are chose as heroes for many reasons. (10) Some heroes be political leaders such as George Washington, Margaret Thatcher, and John F. Kennedy. (11) Spiritual figures such as Jesus Christ, Mohammed, and the Buddha are often name as heroes. (12) In recent surveys, the most popular heroes is sports and entertainment figures like Chris Evert, Clint Eastwood, and Jane Fonda. (13) On some surveys, people choosed their parents as their heroes. (14) When we chooses a hero, we are saying something about our values and beliefs. (15) We admire our heroes and wanted to imitate them. (16) That is why heroes are wrote about so often. (17) The more we known about our heroes, the more we can be like them.

c Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1990

The third assignment is a typical guided writing assignment that students do in about the third week in the semester. They will have previously practiced information-gathering techniques (including freewriting, questioning, listing, interviewing)--all

on the topic of heroes, so students come to this assignment having already gathered information and discussed heroes and heroism. Like many of our writing exercises, this assignment is cumulative. It takes students through the writing process that they discussed about a week earlier and has them gather information through freewriting. In Step 4, students learn to revise for completeness, a term they will not encounter for a few weeks, and in Step 5, students practice the sentence skills they have been studying.

### Exercise 3

#### Writing about a Hero

Follow these five steps to write about a person you think is a hero.

**STEP 1: DECIDE ON A TOPIC.** Look over the heroes you listed in the information-gathering exercise. Choose the one you know the most about or think is the most interesting to write about.

**STEP 2: GATHER INFORMATION.** To get some ideas, first do a focused freewriting about the person. Write continuously for ten minutes about this person. Then look over your focused freewriting and gather your ideas together.

**STEP 3: WRITE A DRAFT.** Now write five to seven sentences about your hero. The first sentence should tell the readers who your hero is. You will probably want to tell the readers a little about your hero's life, and you will want to describe the characteristics or actions that make that person heroic.

**STEP 4: REVISE THE DRAFT.** After you have written your sentences, go back over them to see if you left anything out.

You might have a friend or classmate read over your sentences to see if that person has any suggestions about what should be added to your description of your hero.

STEP 5: PROOFREAD. Check every work to make sure it is spelled correctly. Then, in each sentence, underline the subject once and the verb twice.

c Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1990

Below are two sample student papers written on the previous assignment. I've left the errors in, so you can gauge the writing level of the students, but have omitted the underlining of subjects and verbs.

#### Nelson Mandela

Nelson Mandela is a person I can call a hero with true respect. The long term affect of his words on South African people proves this. Any person who still receives cautious respect from government and true devotion from the people after 27 years of imprisonment has greatness written all over. His dedication to freeing South Africans from the bonds of apartheid would be an enormous task for any group but for those groups to place all there trust in him shows how special Mandela is. The weight of the problems that will face him upon his release make what ever I thought to be a problem very small and also makes me think of the enter strength he must have. Looking from where Nelson Mandela stands it must be frightening and some times

overwhelming to be in such a position but he controls all of this and still goes on. That is a hero. For these reason and many more I call Nelson Mandela a hero.

This paper shows that the student has given considerable thought to why he finds Mandela heroic. Had the student merely been given information from another source, e.g., a newspaper or magazine, and asked to write about Mandela, he would more likely have merely transposed information from the source to his own paper and failed to think about the topic or to consider his own reactions to Mandela. When the student read his paper in class, other students--many of whom did not know of Mandela--became interested, because they saw the information as something students like themselves know. This type of collaborative learning reinforces in students their ability to contribute to and share in the academic world.

### Heroes

Choosing just one hero to write about was not an easy task at first. I thought for a few hours, as well as asked my mom about my hero's I had as a kid. Some of these included Batman and Robin, Superman or any of the Superheroes featured on afternoon cartoons. But as my mom reminded me I had a hero each week. I couldn't come up with much to write about a cartoon hero. So I continued to brainstorm and thought of those I looked up to who made American history as it is today. Again I wasn't satisfied. Then, it hit me. Some one or some people that I have

look up to since I was a kid, and even more today are those who risk their lives to save those of strangers.

My heroes put in many long hard hours working very quickly and carefully to save lives, property and personal belongings of many of our neighbors. They spend many hours learning training and practicing their skills to ensure they do the best job they possibly can. They are here and afar. They are always ready to give their helping hand no matter who may be asking for it. They answer the call of help no matter the time, day or place. Some of my heros are paid for their great service while most are not. Instead, they are known as volunteers who are paid with thank yous and community recognition only.

If you have not guessed my heros are all the volunteer firefighters who put others frist for the reward of satisfaction only.

In this paper about volunteer firefighters, the student has written much more than the assigned five to seven sentences. Typically, developmental students struggle for content, but given assignments that spring from their own experience, they tend to write more, and also more easily. You can see from the first paragraph that the student has come to understand both the process of choosing a topic and also the validity of his own experience as a springboard to writing.

The next assignment is a research assignment in which students gather information through surveying people about their heroes. After tallying the results, students may either do

Assignment A, in which they interpret the results and write briefly about their findings, or Assignment B, in which they pursue additional information. In both assignments, students start with informal conversations and analyze and interpret the data they have gathered. Although the assignment begins informally, the result is college-level research. Through this assignment, students learn that research does not consist of merely collating information from books, but that--to write successfully--they must also interact with the data they gather.

#### EXERCISE 4

##### Gathering Information about Heroes

Survey twenty people about their heroes. Ask these people to list three or four people they consider heroic. Try to survey people of different **ages**, genders, races, and backgrounds. Then tally **up** the surveys to **see** which people were named most often.

ASSIGNMENT A. Figure out **who** was named most often. Do you **think** this person is a hero? **Why** or **why** not? Can you explain **why** this person was chosen so often by so many people? Do you think you would get the same results if you did the survey again and asked **twenty** more people to give their list of heroes? Answer these **questions** in five or six sentences. Then underline the subject once and the verb twice in each sentence.

ASSIGNMENT B. What was the most unusual answer to your survey? If you were going to talk to the person who named the most unusual hero, what would you ask that person? Make a list of

questions you would ask about the hero and about why that person chose that hero.

c Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1990

The next exercise is a more traditional research assignment in which students gather information from reference books. However, the writing assignment--a brief paper stating whether or not the person is a hero and explaining their choice--allows students to incorporate information from texts, but also forces them to evaluate and interpret that information. In the past, students have usually been asked to report on information they gathered; by asking them to interact with text and to offer their opinions, we're introducing them to more traditionally academic ways of interacting with texts. Because students frequently decide that the person named as a hero is not--to them--heroic, they begin to realize that they have the option of disagreeing with a text.

#### EXERCISE 5

##### Researching Heroes

Look up one of these legendary heroes in an encyclopedia or other reference book: Achilles, Paul Bunyan, Helen of Troy, Johnny Appleseed, Lancelot, John Henry. Answer these questions about the hero.

1. Where did he come from? Who are his parents? Is either of his parents supernatural?

2. During what period in history and in what country did the legend of this hero begin?
3. What outstanding moral or physical characteristics did this person possess?
4. What heroic deeds did this person do?
5. Did this person have any faults or weaknesses?
6. Does this character appear in a book, play, poem, movie, or opera?

Write a paper of about ten sentences that answers these questions: Would you agree that this person is a hero? Why or why not?

c Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1990

These are only a few of the types of exercises and assignments students can do on a given topic. I'd also like to show you a few more exercises to demonstrate how traditional elements of the writing course can also easily incorporate academic information.

The following assignment contains two brief exercises in audience analysis. The topic of the unit is film and television. Our assumption in choosing this topic was that students would have been reared on TV and movies so they could easily draw on their experiences. This was a somewhat misguided assumption. Many of our students have full-time jobs, go to college, and have families; they have neither the leisure for television nor the money for movies. The first exercise asks that students examine

advertisements for movies and gauge the intended audience. Students--even in our freshman composition classes--frequently struggle with audience analysis when reading texts. By choosing advertisements that have visual cues and relatively limited verbal texts, students can focus more easily on the elements that make up the ad. They also usually gain insight into themselves as audience by examining their choices of films and television shows.

The second assignment asks that students write two paragraphs convincing someone to see a specific movie. In the first paragraph, the student assumes the reader would like the film; in the second, the student assumes the reader would dislike the film. As a follow-up exercise, students can read their paragraphs and discuss the ways in which changing the audience changes the content and organization of the paper. Typically, some students make few changes in their two paragraphs while others make massive changes to accommodate the changed audience. When the students who made only minor changes read the papers of the students who had greater audience awareness, they are likely to better understand the effect of audience.

#### Exercise 6

##### Audience Analysis

I. Look through the movie section in your local newspaper. Choose two different movie ads. Look at the illustrations, quotes, descriptions, and credits, and decide what audience each film is aimed at. For each film, describe these characteristics of the intended audience:

1. their age
2. their gender
3. their level of education
4. their general income level
5. their special interests
6. what some of their values might be
7. why they would see the movie

II. Choose a movie that you have seen recently. Write a paragraph convincing someone you think would like the movie to see it. Then write a second paragraph convincing someone you think would dislike the movie to see it. Read your paragraphs. List the ways that changing the audience has affected the content of your paragraphs.

c. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1990

In the next exercise students work on writing suitable topic sentences. The topic is marriage. Students must give an opinion on a topic sentence and decide what supporting evidence they would need. They must also consider the likely opinions of their audience. Students move from an informal discussion of casual opinions to a better understanding of how to take a stand in an academic setting; i.e., they practice supporting their opinions by offering specific evidence. In the beginning of the discussion, students often have no difficulty stating their opinions; however, as the discussion continues, they begin to think creatively and critically and to qualify their opinions.

As they consider the ramifications of their opinions, students frequently alter their viewpoints. In the process, they experience the difference between informal and academic opinions and come to realize that, while the acceptance of unexamined opinions is common in informal or social situations, the academic world values carefully examined and supported opinions. The exercise also bolsters their confidence by reinforcing their ability to contribute to academic discussions.

#### Exercise 7

##### Writing Good Topic Sentences

Read the five topic sentences below. These statements need to be explained or proven because some readers would disagree with them. In order to make a reader believe or understand one of these statements, you would have to give information to prove or explain the point. The evidence you give would fill up the rest of the paragraph. Read the topic sentences and then answer these questions: Do you agree or disagree with the statement? What kind of information should be supplied to prove or explain the statement? Who might disagree with this statement? Why might they disagree?

1. The royal wedding of Prince Charles and Princess Diana was beautiful.
2. My sister's wedding dress was too expensive.
3. Arranged marriages are more successful than marriages in which the partners freely choose each other.

4. Men are more romantic than women.
  5. People should not marry before they are twenty-five.
- c Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1990

The following exercise come from a chapter on patterns of paragraph development on the topic of sports and games. Students have studied some common organizational patterns--statement to reasons order, time order, space order, and parts order--and have read examples of each pattern. Here students read a paragraph on bullfighting and decide what pattern the paragraph uses. They then respond to one of the questions, using an appropriate pattern. In addition to having them apply the knowledge of the structures they have just learned, students also consider the various ways in which readers respond to a text and come to understand that there are many valid responses.

#### Exercise 8

##### Paragraph Patterns

Read the paragraph below on bullfighting, and decide what order the paragraph uses. Then write a paragraph answering one of the questions following the paragraph. Choose the organizational pattern you think is most appropriate.

##### A Bloody "Sport"

Bullfighting, a traditional sport of Spain and Mexico, is a four-phase process. In the first phase, the bull is sized up. The matador and his assistants get the bull to charge by waving a cape. They observe how the bull moves and behaves when provoked.

In the next phase, the bull's neck muscles are weakened. Men called picadors force lances into the bull's neck. The third phase further weakens the bull. Banderillas, decorated wooden stakes, are embedded in the bull. The final stage is the most dramatic. By using a muleta, a red cloth on a stick, the matador shows his courage and style by getting the bull to charge close to his body. After a few passes of the bull, the matador plunges a sword between the animal's shoulder blades. As you can see, in this "sport," the bull is helpless against the repeated attacks of these armed men. Because bullfighting is so violent, many people believe it should be banned.

- A. Should bullfighting be banned?
  - B. Would you go to a bullfight if you had a chance?
  - C. What other sports should be banned because of violence against animals or people?
  - D. Is there a sport you find personally repulsive?
  - E. Why do you think bullfighting is so popular?
- c Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1990

The final exercise, below, shows that academic information can easily be incorporated into a course that uses a traditional rhetorical approach. In this unit, which comes toward the end of the course, students are studying rhetorical modes, in this case, cause and effect. The academic topic is wars and revolutions. The assignment asks students to interview a veteran of World War II, the Korean War or the Vietnam War, and to learn the ways in which the war affected the veteran. Students can then either

write a paragraph about one effect or expand their research and write an essay about several effects. In most college courses, students would read texts about war and then react in writing, so that they are moving from the abstract to the personal. As in many of our writing assignments, we reverse the traditional process and start with the students' immediate world--i.e., the people they know. By taking a historical topic and having students approach it on a personal level before moving to the abstract, we are again helping them to bridge the gap between their world and the traditional academic world.

#### Exercise 9

##### Rhetorical Modes: Cause and Effect

Interview a veteran of World War II, the Korean War, or the Vietnam War. Ask the veteran to think about all the positive or negative ways the war affected him or her. Did it have physical or emotional effects? Did it change his or her attitudes or beliefs? Was there a change in the veteran's personality or behavior? Did he or she learn anything? Did the war affect the veteran's finances or career? Record the veteran's responses either with a tape recorder or on paper. Choose one of the following assignments.

A. Write a paragraph about the most significant effects of the war on the veteran. The topic sentence should contain a list of the three most important effects, and each supporting point should describe one of those effects.

B. Interview at least two more veterans of the same war, and write an essay that describes the effects of that war on veterans

in general and that uses the statements made by the people you interviewed to support your conclusions about the effects. The introduction might briefly describe the history and nature of the war (who was fighting whom for what reason in what location using what methods). Each supporting paragraph will describe one effect or group of effects (for example, a paragraph might be about physical effects or about effects on attitudes).

c Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1990

In conclusion, I'd like to mention some of the limitations and the advantages of incorporating academic information into the developmental curriculum. First, the limitations--the choice of topics is admittedly idiosyncratic. Furthermore, topics are limited by how well they can be meshed with composition instruction. Some topics reinforce each other extremely well; e.g., we discuss architecture along with the writing process. Other topics are clearly much more strained; e.g., we mix revision for unity with the topic of weather. A more significant limitation is that this approach, although we find it extremely useful, is no panacea. The incorporation of academic information into the writing curriculum cannot provide a liberal arts education in one semester; indeed, no strategy can make up for years of missed information. There are, however, several advantages. First, students tend to gain in confidence as they discover that their knowledge, experience, reactions, and opinions are valued in the academic world. Secondly, students tend to learn from each other. Although much of the information

is unfamiliar to many in the class, almost invariably at least one student has some knowledge to share on a topic, and students typically begin to value information and want to share it. Even small bits of information can lead to valuable discussions and insights. For example, in one grammar exercise on heroes, the name Excaliber was used. When I asked if anyone recognized the name, one student did, and said he had seen a movie of the same title. Another student had recently shown a videotape of The Sword in the Stone to her child, and still another remembered how she had loved the movie Camelot. Within a few minutes, students briefly compared the films, which led to a recap of a previous discussion of audience and purpose. Both the information and the discussion were student generated, and we have noticed that when information comes from other students in the class, students tend to perceive that information as both accessible to them and as part of their world. Conversely, perhaps because many of these students have previously been unsuccessful academically, they tend to view information coming from traditional sources-- professor or text--as being somehow outside their abilities or their world. By learning from each other, they begin to join the academic world that they previously felt was beyond them. A third advantage is that students seem to like learning more than one thing at a time. Most students realize they are at an academic disadvantage and appreciate the attempt to help them bridge the gap between them and their non-developmental counterparts. The last advantage is that including discussions of academic subjects enlivens the class for faculty and students.

I hope I'm not mortally offending anyone by suggesting that discussions of correct comma usage or even of thesis statements can become somewhat tedious. Centering instruction on composition around topics can make the class lively and interesting for students and professors alike.